

Regional Council Activity Report

April 5, 1999

Briefing to Member Agencies from Executive Director James M. Bourey



Executive Director's Report

As the state legislature moves toward adoption of a two-year, 12 billion dollar budget, we are increasingly optimistic that the final plan will include the financing mechanisms needed to accelerate completion of the Valley Freeway System to the year 2007. The Maricopa Association of Governments Regional Council unanimously passed a resolution supporting this important legislation, and many city staff members helped educate lawmakers about the need for these crucial changes. We are eager to deliver a complete freeway system that has been wanted and needed in this region for so many years.

The issues of congestion, growth and urban expansion remain among the top concerns of citizens around the country, and the Maricopa region is no exception. While it is important to remember that growth is the offspring of economic success, MAG has been working on a variety of fronts to proactively address the many challenges brought about by that success. One way that we have been doing that recently is by using MAG's extensive knowledge and expertise to brief policymakers about our region and to outline the scope of these challenges.

In March, MAG was asked to provide a regional overview to the Urban and Rural Growth Patterns Subcommittee of the Growing Smarter Commission. The presentation included an analysis of the region in the areas of population and housing; employment; education; transportation; air quality; water; agriculture and open space. We were told that the presentation was the most comprehensive and informative overview of the region that subcommittee members have ever had.

In addition, I have been asked to present an overview of MAG's roles and responsibilities to the Governor's Transportation Vision 21 Task Force on April 8, 1999. The presentation will define the many ways in which MAG's transportation functions are interrelated with our many other tasks and responsibilities. We believe it is important for the task force to learn how our efforts in the areas of air quality, socioeconomic and human services, land use planning, teleconferencing, etc., are all inextricably tied to transportation issues,

as well as the specific role we play in transportation planning. It is rewarding to us to know that our input is being sought by so many diverse groups who are planning for our future.

While we have been busy monitoring the numerous activities taking place in the transportation arena locally, we have also been monitoring a significant development which has occurred in the transportation/air quality arena nationally. On Tuesday, March 2nd, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia issued a decision that has potentially significant implications for non-attainment areas (such as ours), including the elimination of “grandfathered” projects included in amendments to the Transportation Conformity Rule of 1997.

The Court ruled that the section of EPA’s transportation conformity regulation that permits regionally significant highway projects to proceed during a conformity lapse of a Long Range Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program violates the Clean Air Act and must be stricken. The Court further found that the section that permits conformity determinations to be made using submitted, but not yet approved emissions budgets is inconsistent with the law’s intent and must be amended to be based only on emissions budgets contained in approved State Implementation Plans (SIPs).

In simpler terms, this means that in any non-attainment area where more than three years have passed since conformity of a plan or program has been demonstrated, no regionally significant, federally-funded or non-federally funded project will be able to proceed. Even projects under construction could potentially be halted. In Atlanta, for example, which has been in a conformity lapse for an extended period of time, action on \$1.3 billion worth of highway projects is likely to be stopped.

Ironically, even supporters of the Environmental Defense Fund, which brought the case, are concerned the ruling may go too far. If too many urban areas suffer, it could lead to a major push to reopen the Clean Air Act and other congressional changes not desired by environmental groups. A complete understanding of the effects of this ruling will only be known when EPA rewrites the conformity regulations.



Regional Council Meeting Report for March 24, 1999

Vote on TIP and Plan Delayed

During the Regional Council meeting March 24th, it was announced that a vote on whether to approve the draft Fiscal Year 2000-2004 MAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the MAG Long Range Transportation Plan (Plan) for conformity analysis would be delayed until the Council's next meeting April 28th. Because Chairman Neil Giuliano was out of the country and could not be present for the vote, Council members wanted to give the City of Tempe a greater opportunity to express its concerns about HOV projects included in the TIP and Plan. All items dealing with these two programs have been moved to the April 28th agenda.

For more information, contact Dennis Smith, Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.

Council Approves \$20.8 million in 1999 Closeout Projects

The MAG Regional Council unanimously approved \$20.8 million in additions to the first year of the FY 1999-2003 MAG Transportation Improvement Program and FY 1999 Unified Planning Work Program and Annual Budget. The additions included a variety of pedestrian and telecommunications projects, \$5.7 million for new buses, a \$100,000 MAG Northwest Grand Avenue Study, a dust stabilization project in Surprise, a \$500,000 Travel Study, and more.

Also approved was \$300,000 to finance a new summer Ozone Campaign. Under the campaign, Valley companies will be notified 24-hours in advance that a high pollution advisory is imminent. Employers will be asked to reduce the number of employee vehicles that travel to the work site by at least 10 percent via teleworking or other trip reduction means.

For more information contact Paul Ward, Transportation Programming Manager, (602) 254-6300.



Upcoming Issues

Finishing Touches Put on Draft Regional Domestic Violence Plan

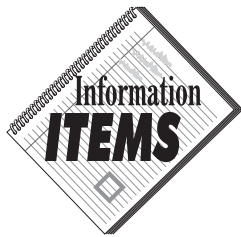
The MAG Domestic Violence Subcommittee is finalizing draft recommendations to be included in the Regional Domestic Violence Plan, after reviewing public comment received during a public hearing held at MAG on March 23rd. The hearing, which is being aired in its entirety on city-run cable channels throughout the Valley, included testimony from victims and shelter services providers. They were providing feedback on 41 recommendations proposed by a group of 150 professionals and individuals who spent four months working on the plan.

The recommendations follow a year of tragic and brutal slayings in Maricopa County which left 30 women, eight men and one unborn child dead following domestic violence incidents. After the public comments are reviewed, the draft plan will be forwarded to several human services committees, and is expected to be included on the agenda at the April 28th Regional Council meeting.

For more information, contact Carol Kratz, MAG Human Services Manager, (602) 254-6300.

Pedestrian Working Group to Recommend Projects, Consultants

At the next Regional Council Meeting, the MAG Pedestrian Working Group will be submitting for approval a list of projects to receive \$150,000 in funding under the MAG Pedestrian Design Assistance Program. The cities whose projects are recommended to receive assistance are the Town of Gila Bend, the City of Peoria and the City of Phoenix. The Group will also recommend eight consultants for on-call consulting assistance for the design of pedestrian areas and facilities.



Information Items

MAG Unveils Recycling Program to Help Solid Waste Planners

The Maricopa Association of Governments unveiled its Regional Recycling Information Exchange (RRIE) Project during a workshop held at the MAG offices March 16th. Funded through a grant from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, the project seeks to provide cities, solid waste planners and the public with information that will help communities develop viable recycling programs.

The RRIE project has four main goals: to encourage the development of recycling programs, to establish a recycling Web site, to hold regional forums to discuss recycling and solid waste issues, and to provide a database to help track solid waste in Maricopa County. That database, the Solid Waste Information Management System (SWIMS), has been set up to analyze recycling trends and solid waste systems. The database incorporates socioeconomic, waste generation, waste disposal and recycling information to calculate past trends, examine current activities, and make forecasts for the future. The SWIMS system is flexible, enabling planners to input data based on a variety of scenarios. Communities can use the SWIMS database to better manage their solid waste systems, improve recycling programs, save money and generate revenue.

For more information, contact Drenan Dudley, Environmental Planner, (602) 254-6300.



Upcoming Events

Y2K Forum to Provide Sharing Opportunity

The Maricopa Association of Governments will convene the first of a series of forums dealing with issues surrounding the Year 2000 computer problem on April 22nd, 9:00 a.m., at the MAG Offices, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Suite 200. Agenda items will include an overview of Y2K issues by a representative from the City of Phoenix, a representative of the Valleywide Public Information Officers, and the Chair of the MAG 911 Oversight Committee. These presentations will be followed by a roundtable discussion in which cities can share information, questions, ideas, and best practices for dealing with Y2K issues. For more information, contact Kelly Taft, MAG Public Communications Program Manager, (602) 452-5020.

Statewide Census 2000 Kickoff Scheduled

On Tuesday, April 6th, Arizona Governor Jane Hull will join officials from the Census Bureau, local elected officials and interested members of the community for "Countdown to Census 2000," the official statewide kickoff of Census 2000. The program will begin at 2:15 p.m. in the 2nd floor conference room in the executive tower at the state capitol. MAG Executive Director James M. Bourey will participate on the panel. The event will focus on the importance of the Census to each community and how federal, state and local officials can work together to ensure the highest possible participation in Census 2000.

For more information, contact Harry Wolfe, Socioeconomic Program Manager, (602) 254-6300.

Next Regional Council Meeting

The next Regional Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 28, 1999 at 5:00 p.m. Agenda items will include the proposed acceptance of the MAG Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan for Conformity Analysis; Formation of the MAG Transit Planning Group; Update of the Roads of Regional Significance Plan; Update on Potential Census Bureau delays; Water Service Area Resident Population Update; and a status report on the Videoconferencing Project and forthcoming vendor demonstrations. The Study Session will focus on the consideration of the MAG Regional Domestic Violence Plan.

For more information, contact Dennis Smith, MAG Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.